

REMARKS

Claims 1-76 and 90 have been cancelled. Claims 84-86 and 91 have been amended. New claims 95-99 have been added. Claims 77-89 and 91-99 remain in the application.

Claims 77 and 84 are rejected for anticipation by US Patent No. 6,143,020 ("Shigezawa"). That rejection is moot with respect to claim 84 which has been amended and is traversed with respect to claim 77 for the following reasons.

Rejection of a claim for anticipation by a reference requires that the reference describe, in its four corners, every element or step, and every limitation thereof, of the rejected claim.

Claim 77 is drawn to a combination for controlling airflow between an air hose and an inflatable thermal device that includes an inlet port in the device to be coupled with the end of the air hose and "a mechanism disposed in the air hose near the end *for opening* to enable airflow out of the end when the end is coupled with the inlet port." The italics have been added for emphasis.

In characterizing Shigezawa, the proposal in the first full paragraph on page 3 of the Office Action is that "the "mechanism" (68 which includes 70) acts to control the flow of pressurized air as disclosed when describing an analogous mechanism (12 which includes 44) in col. 5:33-43." That may be, but the characterization is incomplete with respect to claim 77 which recites a mechanism disposed in an air hose, near an end, "*for opening to enable*", not "*for controlling*" airflow (italics added for emphasis). According to Shigezawa at column 6, lines 16-21, element 68 is "a coupler unit" and element 70 is "a mounting structure" that supports a sensor unit 72. At column 5, lines 33-43, Shigezawa describes an X-shaped mounting structure 44 for sensors 36 and 38. The constitution and configuration of the mounting structure generate turbulence in warmed air flowing through a flexible conduit in order to enable the sensors to more nearly measure mean average air temperature in the conduit. The element 12 is a coupler like the coupler unit 68. That is to say, both element 12 and element 68 are coupler units that fasten or link the end of a flexible conduit to a coupling port on a thermal blanket. See Shigezawa at column 6, lines 19-21. Both of the coupler units 12 and 68 appear to be permanently open. Further, the mounting structures 44 and 70 appear also to be fixed in form and immobile in their respective coupler units. Neither coupler unit can close and so cannot perform the function of "opening"; neither mounting structure 44/70 endows the coupler

in which it is mounted with the ability to perform this function. In other words, Shigezawa does not describe a coupler unit, or any other element disposed on an end of an air hose, as capable of performing the function of "opening to enable airflow out of the end when the end is coupled with" the inlet port of an inflatable thermal device. Accordingly, Shigezawa does not anticipate claim 77.

Objection is made to claims 78-83 and 85-94 for depending on a rejected base claim, with the observation that those claims would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Claims 78-83

These claims have been objected to for depending on a rejected base claim. However, since, as argued above, claim 77 is allowable, it is submitted that the basis for this objection is obviated with respect to claims 78-83.

Claims 84-89 and 91-94

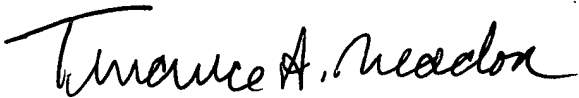
Claim 84 has been amended to incorporate the steps and limitations of claim 90. Accordingly, claim 84 corresponds to claim 90 rewritten in independent form. Claim 84 is therefore allowable, as are claims 85-89 and 91-94 which depend from it.

Claims 95-99

Claim 95 corresponds to claim 85 (before amendment) rewritten in independent form by incorporating the steps of its rejected base claim. Claim 95 therefore is allowable, as are claims 96-99 which depend from it.

In view of these amendments and remarks, it is submitted that all claims remaining in the application are allowable, early notice of which is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,


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Date: *February 2, 2004*

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